

PREFACE.

THE Author does not propose an elaborate explanation, nor an apology of any kind, for the benefit of the following work. If it absolutely requires either, he must even be content to have written it in vain, as no statement or argument can give it any degree of vitality or popularity in the one case or in the other.

He has regarded it, historically, as an act of mere justice to the fame and the memories of many wise, brilliant, brave and generous men,—patriots, orators, warriors and statesmen,—who ruled over barbarian communities, and were indeed themselves barbarians, but whose influence, eloquence and success of every description were *therefore* but the nobler objects of admiration and the worthier subjects for record. Nor can Philosophy look upon them without predilection. Comparatively unopinionated and unaffected as they were,—governed by impulse and guided by native sense,—owing little to circumstances, and struggling much amidst and against them,—their situation was the best possible for developing both genius and principle, and their education at the same time the best for disclosing them. Their Lives, then, should illustrate the true constitution of man. They should have, above all other history, the praise and the interest of ‘philosophy teaching by example.’

The strictly moral inducements which have operated on the Author's mind, must be too obvious to require dissertation. We owe, and our Fathers owed, too much to the Indians,—too much from man to man,—too much from race to race,—to deny them the poor restitution of historical justice at least, however the issue may have been or may be with themselves. Nor need it be suggested, that selfishness alone might dictate the policy of a collection such as the Author has endeavored to make this, were it only for the collateral light which it constantly throws on the history and biography of our own nation.

Nothing of the same character is before the public. What may be called an Indian Biographical Dictionary has indeed recently appeared, and to that the Author has gladly referred in the course of his researches; but the extreme difficulty of doing justice to *any* individuals of the race, and at the same time to *all*, may be inferred from the fact that the writer alluded to has noticed such men as Uncas in some six or eight lines, while he has wholly omitted characters so important as Buckongahelas, White-eyes, Pipe, and Oconostota. On these, and on all their more eminent countrymen, the Author has intended to bestow the notice they deserve, by passing over the vast multitude distinguished only by detached anecdote, or described only in general terms.

In fine, conscious of many imperfections, but also conscious of a strenuous exertion to render them as few and small as might be, the Author submits the Biography to the public, and especially to the candor of those whose own labors, if not the results of them, have shown them the essential fallibility of every composition like this. He will have reason to be satisfied if it do good, as he will assuredly be gratified if it give pleasure.

Boston, Sept. 10, 1832.